

Substance Abuse

What is Chemical Dependency?

Primary disease characterized by the compulsive use of mood altering drugs (including alcohol) despite adverse consequences (I continue to do something, expected different result).

Characteristics

- ✓ Primary Disease: The disease itself causes drinking or drug use. It is not secondary to some other disease or mental illness.
- ✓ Chronic: There is no cure for the disease, but it can be treated and controlled. It demands a change in behavior.
- ✓ Progressive: The disease always gets worse, it does not get better, and there is no turning back and beginning all over again as if one never drank or used.
- ✓ Fatal: This is a fatal disease if not controlled. It always leads to premature death and serious health problems even if death certificate indicates the cause of death to be on eof the complications of the disease, e.g., heart problems, liver failure, bleeding ulcers, etc.
- ✓ Treatable: The disease can be controlled if the drinking or drug use stops. It is much like diabetes in the sense that if the body chemistry is stabilized by not drinking or using, the the alcoholic may lead a normal life.
- ✓ Relapse is Common
- ✓ Genetics Play a Part: Since 1980 many studies corroborate genetic or familial predisposition to the disease.
- ✓ DENIAL is a hallmark of the disease.